

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 05958 291537Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5958

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5958

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: SHIP VISITS BOSTON AND LENINGRAD: HANDLING OF POSSIBLE
ASYLUM REQUESTS

1. DURING THE 12-17 MAY EXCHANGE OF SHIP VISITS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE USSR IN BOSTON AND LENINGRAD, THERE WILL BE TOURS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET OFFICERS AND MEN IN THE VICINITY OF BOSTON. CONCURRENTLY, THERE WILL BE TWO OR THREE OCCASIONS OF GENERAL VISITING ABOARD U.S. SHIPS IN LENINGRAD. SOVIET AUTHORITIES WILL NOT COMMENT ON NUMBERS OF SOVIET CITIZENS WHICH MIGHT VISIT THE U.S. SHIPS. HOWEVER, MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND SOVIET CITIZENS TOURED FRENCH SHIPS IN LENINGRAD IN JULY 1973.

2. WITH THIS UNPRECEDENTED CONTACT BETWEEN THE TWO POPULATIONS, THE PROBABILITY OF SOMEONE REQUESTING ASYLUM IS STATISTICALLY HIGHER THAN NORMAL. THIS, PLUS THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SHIP VISIT AND ITS HIGH PUBLIC VISIBILITY WOULD SEEM TO JUSTIFY A REVIEW OF EXISTING PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING POTENTIAL REFUGEES, TO DETERMINE WHETHER SPECIAL GUIDANCE IS REQUIRED.

3. OUR CONCERN HERE, OF COURSE, IS WITH LENINGRAD WHERE THE PRIMARY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASYLUM REQUESTS WOULD BE DURING GENERAL VISITING. SEVERAL POSSIBLE SITUATIONS CAN BE IMAGINED IN WHICH A SOVIET CITIZEN COULD REQUEST POLITICAL ASYLUM, CLAIMING THAT HIS RETURN TO SOVIET AUTHORITIES WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO HIS LIFE. TWO, AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM, WOULD BE:

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A. A CAREFULLY PLANNED OPERATION RESULTING IN A STOWAWAY,
AT LEAST OUTWARDLY WITHOUT SOVIET KNOWLEDGE.

B. A SCUFFLE ON BOARD IN WHICH A SOVIET CITIZEN SUCCEEDS
IN FORCING HIS WAY OUT OF CROWD AND RUNS BELOW DECKS.

4. WHILE THE SCHEDULE IS NOT YET APPROVED BY SOVIETS, GENERAL
VISITING WILL PROBABLY BE FOR THREE HOURS EACH OF TWO AFTERNOONS.
FOR THAT LIMITED PERIOD WE COULD ENSURE THAT PROPERLY BRIEFED U.S.
LINGUISTS WERE PHYSICALLY ONBOARD TO ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTATION OF
AGREED PROCEDURES.

5. REQUEST DEPARTMENT REVIEW EXISTING GUIDANCE AS REFLECTED IN
2 FAM 227-229, COORDINATE WITH OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES,
AND ISSUE SUCH SPECIFIC GUIDANCE AS MAY BE DEEMED APPROPRIATE.
RECOMMEND INCLUDE SPECIAL HANDLING PROCEDURES FOR ANY MESSAGE
TRAFFIC THAT MIGHT BE INVOLVED.
STOESSEL

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